

REMARKS

Applicants thank the Examiner for total consideration given the present application. Claims 1-14 were pending prior to the final Office Action. Claims 11 and 12 have been cancelled through this Reply. Thus, claims 1-10 and 13-14 are currently pending of which claim 2 stands withdrawn from further consideration as being drawn to non-elected species. Claim 1 is independent. Claims 1, 3, and 13 have been amended through this Reply. Upon careful review, one would conclude that no new matter has been added to the application via this Amendment. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the rejected claims in light of the remarks presented herein, and earnestly seek timely allowance of all pending claims.

ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

Applicants further appreciate that claim 12 is indicated to define allowable subject matter.

OBJECTION TO THE DRAWINGS

The Examiner objects to the Drawings under 37 CFR 1.83(a). More specifically, the Examiner alleges that the drawings must show the claimed feature “first and second end portions of the metallic member”. It is respectfully submitted that at least Figures 1, 3 and 4 clearly show the first and second portions of the metallic member 22.

Thus, it is respectfully requested that this rejection be withdrawn.

35 U.S.C. § 112, SECOND PARAGRAPH REJECTION

Claim 3 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as allegedly being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. This claim has been amended through this Reply to address this issue.

35 U.S.C. § 103 REJECTION – Watanabe, Ohta, Senjo, Imamura

Claims 1, 3, 4 and 11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Watanabe et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,089,536)[hereinafter “Watanabe”] in view of Ohta et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,157,103)[hereinafter “Ohta”].

Claims 5 and 8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Watanabe in view of Ohta and further in view of Senjo et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,831,360)[hereinafter "Senjo"].

Claims 6, 9, and 10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Watanabe in view of Ohta and further in view of Imamura et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,938,614)[hereinafter "Ohta"].

Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections. Independent claim 1 has been amended to add the allowable subject-matter of claim 12. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that claim 1 is allowable over the applied prior art references.

Claims 3-11 and 13-14 are allowable at least by virtue of their dependency on claim 1.

Claim Joinder

Claim 2 depends from claim 1. Thus, upon allowance of claim 1, joinder of claim 2 is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

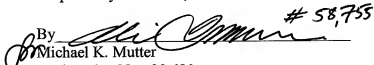
In view of the above amendment, Applicants believe the pending application is in condition for allowance.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Ali M. Imam Reg. No. 58,755 at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37.C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Dated: DRAFT

Respectfully submitted,

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